CHAPTER XV

CANTON IN 1924

IT would be no exaggeration to describe Canton, throughout 1924, as an inferno. Practically eveiy news-despatch reported additional forms of oppression—new taxes on commodities, on rickshaw coolies, on rents, etc., forced loans, new issues of unsecured paper currency, debasement of subsidiary coinage, and so on. Piracy and armed robbery were rampant. Dr. Sun's Yunnan and Hunan mercenaries systematically preyed upon the city, murdering police and civilians who did not immediately comply with their orders. They fought among themselves also, especially when some new form of extortion was in issue. They occupied the railways and collected increased fares and goods charges for their own benefit. In spite of all these levies and miseries, Dr. Sun's plans of conquest made little progress. In March a reliable report credited him and his mercenaries with control of only 32 out of the 96 districts that constitute the Province of Kwangtung. The sum raised by various forms of taxation and extortion was amazing. It was estimated that the gambling revenues alone were being collected at the rate of

$34,000,000 per annum. The Cantonese —other
than the Labour Unions who were being encouraged
to put forward more and more extreme demands-
were weary of Dr. Sun and his antics. The situa*